

# THE DELAYED CESSION OF SPANISH SANTO DOMINGO TO FRANCE, 1795-1801

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## I

The year 1795 marked the end of an era in the history of Spanish Santo Domingo. The eastern section of the Caribbean island of Española, once the cornerstone of the vast Spanish dominions in the New World, had for more than a century been allowed to drift into a state of neglect, a neglect which was far from salutary from the standpoint of commercial and social development. Spanish vessels bearing the vital articles of commerce had long since ceased to disturb the quiet waters of Santo Domingo harbor; and with the exception of an occasional vessel from Spain and the annual arrival of a ship from Mexico bringing funds to support the local governmental and military establishments, communication with the outside world was virtually non-existent.<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this decline are not here in point. Suffice it to say that the stultifying effects of the mercantile system coupled with a restrictive tobacco monopoly and absentee ownership of the land had all taken their toll, leaving the local inhabitants relatively undisturbed in their peaceful agricultural economy.<sup>2</sup>

The meteoric development of the west end of this island during the eighteenth century provided a striking contrast, French Saint Domingue having become in the course of fifty years the sugar mill of Europe and the richest jewel in the French colonial crown.<sup>3</sup> Such a rapid rise in the commercial

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<sup>1</sup> William Walton, Jr., *Present State of the Spanish Colonies; Including a Particular Report of Hispaniola* . . . (2 vols., London, 1810), I, 178.

<sup>2</sup> Sumner Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard* (2 vols., New York, 1928), I, 1-6; Walton, *op. cit.*, I, 177-184.

<sup>3</sup> Memoir of Ossun, February 10, 1774, quoted by Rayford W. Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776-1891* (Chapel Hill, 1941), p. 3. The production of French Saint Domingue in the year 1788 had

activity of a close neighbor could not fail to have at least an indirect effect on the Spanish colony, and such indeed was the case, for by 1790 the inhabitants of the eastern section were enjoying a moderate prosperity based largely on the sale of their cattle to the French in exchange for manufactured goods brought in from Europe and the North American mainland. While this commerce was legal within the terms of an agreement made between Spain and France as early as 1777, it did not redound to the benefit of the mother country, and the colony continued to be a drain on the royal treasury to the extent of around \$300,000 a year.<sup>4</sup> The attitude of the Spanish government was well characterized by Don Manuel de Godoy when he wrote a number of years later that "this fraction of our colonial possessions was not only useless to Spain, but burdensome in its then existing condition. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

Although Spain possessed roughly two-thirds of the island of Española with a wide variety of natural resources at her disposal, including mineral deposits and valuable mahogany forests, the local economy was based solely on a sugar plantation system in the south and on the production of livestock in the central plain known as the Cibao and along the northern coast. Much of the labor was performed by approximately sixty thousand slaves, most of them born on the island and allowed to work out their lives under the lax and easygoing supervision of the plantation managers and mulatto foremen.<sup>6</sup> Of a total population of around 125,000, some

reached a total value of 179,383,396 *livres* (*European Magazine and London Review*, May, 1797, p. 315). This was close to the figure for 1790 when the total commerce was estimated to have a value of \$36,000,000—equal or greater than the total for the United States in the same year (cf. Logan, *op. cit.*, note, p. 3). Also see statements concerning the trade position of Saint Domingue during this period in Ludwell Lee Montague, *Haiti and the United States, 1714-1938* (Durham, 1940), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Antonio Sánchez Valverde, *Idea del valor de la isla Española* (Madrid, 1785), pp. 132-133; Walton, *op. cit.*, I, 178.

<sup>5</sup> *Memoirs of the Prince of Peace*, trans. and ed. by J. B. D'Esménard (2 vols., London, 1836), I, 393.

<sup>6</sup> Welles, *op. cit.*, I, 1. Others have placed the slave population much lower. Sánchez Valverde (*op. cit.*, p. 150) estimates a total of between twelve and fourteen thousand in 1785. This figure was presumably based upon an ecclesiastical census in which only those were counted who participated in the sacraments of the church.

forty thousand were white and largely concentrated in the cities of Santo Domingo, Santiago, Azua, Puerto Plata, Monte Christi, and Cotuy. In addition to the slaves and the Spaniards, there were a large number of mulattoes and quadroons and a good many black freedmen, this whole group numbering perhaps twenty-five thousand and occupying a relatively inferior position on the social scale.<sup>7</sup>

Here again, a marked contrast with the French section should be noted, for on the west end of the island a most intensive sugar plantation economy prevailed, based on the closely supervised labor of half a million first-generation Negro slaves held in check by from thirty to forty thousand white planters.<sup>8</sup> These marked differences were to have a profound effect on the future history of the island, particularly in the period from 1795 to 1801.

So strong were the pressures produced and so intense were the hatreds generated under the French system that beginning in 1789 a series of movements, first started among the third-estate whites and then taken up by the mulattoes and eventually by the Negro slaves themselves, completely overturned the social and political order and destroyed the basis of the entire economy. Given impetus by the social and political revolution then going on in France, by the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and by the proclamation of Commissioner L. F. Sonthonax on August 29, 1793, freeing the slaves, the pent-up forces of social unrest broke all bonds and reduced the western end of the island to a shambles in which competing bands of Negroes and mulattoes struggled for supremacy.<sup>9</sup> French control grew rapidly weaker as conditions in France and war with England, Spain, Austria, and Prussia detracted the attention of the capital from colonial matters.

Of no less importance, and of particular significance from the point of view of the Spanish settlers on the eastern end

<sup>7</sup> M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie espagnole de l'isle Saint-Domingue* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1796), I, 44-57.

<sup>8</sup> Walton, *op. cit.*, I, 22; T. Lathrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston and New York, 1914), pp. 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> For excellent studies of this chapter of French colonial history see J. Saint-oyant, *La colonisation française, 1799-1815* (Paris, 1915); and Stoddard, *op. cit.*

of the island, was the attempt of the French government to carry the ideals of the French Revolution into the colonies, and into Saint Domingue in particular. Two sets of civil commissioners were sent to the colony to force compliance with the new concepts of political rights. The first group was ineffectual. The second group, dominated by the Jacobin, Sonthonax, arrived on September 18, 1792, and, although charged with granting political equality to the mulattoes, threw its influence first behind this group as against the royalist and proletarian whites, and then behind the slaves as against both the mulattoes and the whites.<sup>10</sup> Were these ideas to be carried over into the Spanish zone, the basis of white authority would certainly be undermined. It speaks well indeed for Spanish slavery policy that no important uprisings took place. An English contemporary of the period with wide experience in the West Indies was prompted later to remark that "the Spanish slaves in general are the most orderly in the West Indies, and although surrounded with incentives to revolt, they have uniformly adhered to their masters."<sup>11</sup>

The events in the west end of the island at first caused little stir in the Spanish colony; but on March 7, 1793, when the French National Assembly declared war on Spain because of the latter's refusal to agree to a disarmed neutrality,<sup>12</sup> the colonists found themselves plunged headlong into the turmoil raging in the west. Don Joaquín García, captain-general of the colony and president of the royal audiencia, not only strengthened the Spanish garrisons along the border with troops brought from neighboring islands, but conceived the idea of attacking the French stronghold at Cap Français. However, the desertion to the French of Toussaint Louverture and a large body of Negro troops who had joined the Spanish forces from the French section of the island brought the plan to naught. García fought the remainder of the war from defensive positions behind the colony's border.<sup>13</sup>

In June of 1794 Commissioners Sonthonax and F. de Polverel were recalled to France, leaving the black Toussaint to

<sup>10</sup> Stoddard, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>11</sup> Walton, *op. cit.*, I, 184.

<sup>12</sup> *Le moniteur* (Paris), February 8, 1793.

<sup>13</sup> Welles, *op. cit.*, I, 16.

consolidate his dominance of the Negroes in the north and André Rigaud, a mulatto leader, to oppose a British force which had landed in the south. Thus in 1795, the entire west end of the island was under actual Negro or mulatto control with French authority only nominally maintained. Such was the situation on the island of Española when a royal order of September 8, 1795, reached Santo Domingo bringing news that the Spanish colony had been ceded to France by the Treaty of Basle.<sup>14</sup>

## II

That the cession of Spanish Santo Domingo to France came as a profound shock to the inhabitants of the colony is readily understandable. To them it could only mean the abolition of slavery and domination of the territory by the Negroes and mulattoes already in control of the French section of the island. However, immediate submission to such authority was spared the unhappy people, whose vigorous protests were forwarded by the audiencia and the captain-general to Spain. By the terms of the treaty, the colony was to be ceded in exchange for the evacuation of territory occupied by French troops on the Iberian Peninsula; but the exact date of the transfer was not specified, it being provided rather that the Spanish forces should hold themselves in readiness to leave their positions in Santo Domingo "in order to give them up to the troops of the French Republic as soon as they shall arrive to take possession of them."<sup>15</sup> Many events were to intervene before French control became a reality, and for a time the local population was able to entertain the hope that the cession might never be effectuated.

There would seem to be no question that the French expected to take possession of the Spanish colony within a short time. Less than two months after the treaty had been ratified, P. R. Roume de St. Laurent, who had been one of the first

<sup>14</sup> Declaration of Fernando Porrillo y Torres, archbishop of Santo Domingo, in "La paz de Basilea," *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación* (Ciudad Trujillo), III (1940), 280-283.

<sup>15</sup> Treaty of Basle, July 22, 1795, Articles IV and IX, in Geo Fréd. de Martens, ed., *Recueil des principaux traités . . . de l'Europe*, Première Serie, Deuxième Edition (16 vols., Gottingue, 1829), VI, 124-128.

group of civil commissioners dispatched to Saint Domingue in 1791, was sent to Madrid to enter into negotiations leading to the transfer. His brief stay in the Spanish capital was followed by his departure on a royal frigate for the colony, where he arrived April 8, 1796. In the meantime the French government had named a five-man commission to handle the civil administration of the entire island, Roume being one of the men so honored and given special jurisdiction in the Spanish zone. General Étienne Lavaux, already governor of the French section, was named commander in chief of that area and General Rochambeau was named to a similar post in the Spanish section.<sup>16</sup>

Before Rochambeau and his staff were able to leave France, two events took place which tended to delay the actual cession. Under terms of the Treaty of Basle the Spanish government was to provide transportation not only for the military personnel stationed in Santo Domingo, but also for those subjects who might wish to be transferred to other Spanish possessions.<sup>17</sup> By a letter dated September 8, 1795, the Spanish foreign minister, Don Manuel de Godoy, notified the colonists that His Majesty would give to such of his subjects as might want to leave Santo Domingo, property in Cuba equal to that which they already possessed.<sup>18</sup> To make possible this transfer of population, the squadron of ships under Lieutenant General Gabriel de Aristizábal was to come from Habana to Santo Domingo and pick up those who wished to depart.<sup>19</sup> The squadron reached Santo Domingo in December of 1795, but inasmuch as an offer of surrender made by Captain-General García to an agent of General Lavaux was refused on the ground that there were no French troops

<sup>16</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau au ministre de la Marine," Paris, 13 *fructidor*, an 9 (published in full in *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación* [Ciudad Trujillo], Vols. I-II, 1938-1939), I, 178 (hereinafter cited as "Rapport de Kerversau").

<sup>17</sup> Article IX. This was supplemented by a royal order of September 8, 1795 and an additional order of February 4, 1796.

<sup>18</sup> Instructions to the Cuban officials regarding subjects transferred from Santo Domingo were included in a royal order of March 7, 1796 (*Boletín del Archivo Nacional* [Habana], XXIX [1931], 285).

<sup>19</sup> Godoy to Porillo y Torres, September 8, 1795, in "La paz de Basilea," *loc. cit.*

available to replace the Spaniards, the Spanish garrison was not removed and but few of the populace availed themselves of the opportunity to leave. On the other hand, the Spanish officials made use of the ships to remove what they believed to be the remains of Christopher Columbus from the island. Thus the first opportunity to make effective the treaty cession was by-passed because of the lack of French military personnel, a difficulty that was to necessitate still further delay.<sup>20</sup>

The second event involving postponement was occasioned by an apparent shift in policy at the Spanish court,<sup>21</sup> resulting in a proposal being made to the French government that Santo Domingo be returned to Spain in exchange for Louisiana. The offer was made late in 1795 in the form of a proposed treaty and was eventually rejected by the French Directory in June, 1796.<sup>22</sup> Both the proposal and its rejection are remarkable in view of previous expressions of both governments. In the negotiations at Basle, the Spanish envoy, Don Domingo de Yriarte, had shown a determination to hang on to Louisiana no less persistent than the attempts of the French envoy to obtain the retrocession of that important territory, given to Spain by secret agreement at Paris in 1763.<sup>23</sup> This had been true in spite of the fact that the possibility of Spain's bringing Louisiana within the still fairly tight mercantile economy of the Spanish empire was at the same time being subverted in negotiations with the United States at San Lorenzo.

The desire of France to recover her North American possessions had been the subject of frequent discussions almost from the day of its loss in 1763, one reason being the expectation of using the vast resources of this area as a source of supply for all French possessions in the Western Hemisphere, thus breaking the dependence of such colonies as Saint Do-

<sup>20</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 182.

<sup>21</sup> This change in policy was only apparent and may be regarded as one phase of a long bargaining procedure. For the broader aspects of the Spanish policy at this time, see Arthur P. Whitaker, "Spain and the Retrocession of Louisiana," *The American Historical Review*, XXXIX (April, 1934).

<sup>22</sup> Dhermand to Delacroix, Madrid, December 21, 1795, cited by Whitaker, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

<sup>23</sup> Logan, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

mingue upon trade with British North America and later the United States.<sup>24</sup> General F. M. de Kerversau made the assertion, with perhaps a touch of bitter sarcasm, that the French Directory "decided that the general liberty which appeared to them so difficult to establish in the Spanish part of Santo Domingo would be almost impossible to make recognized in Louisiana," and therefore "the proposal of the Court of Madrid was rejected."<sup>25</sup> The real reason would seem to lie in other terms of the proposed treaty, terms which would have bound France to assist Spain in recovering Gibraltar from the English and recovering fishing rights off Newfoundland.

Upon the failure of these negotiations, General Rochambeau and his staff, which included General Kerversau, together with the four remaining members of the new commission, left France and arrived at Cap Français.<sup>26</sup> Even the commissioners, one of whom was the former agent, Sonthonax, realized the undesirability of taking over the Spanish settlements with Negro troops. However, an insufficient number of white soldiers was available and no ships were at hand either to transport French troops or to remove the Spaniards.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the colonial treasury was empty. All this added up to but one result: further delay.<sup>28</sup> After two months of inaction, General Rochambeau decided to go alone to Santo Domingo and use the local militia to control the colony, but a split had occurred between him and the commissioners and, upon what Kerversau described as a "vague denunciation," he was arrested and sent back to France.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See Logan's discussion of this problem (*op. cit.*, pp. 54-59).

<sup>25</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 180.

<sup>26</sup> The fifth member, Roume, was in Santo Domingo.

<sup>27</sup> The situation was greatly complicated by intense rivalries among the various local commanders in the French zone. Each commander feared—and justly so—to release troops from his command lest his personal position thereby be weakened and the way paved for his defeat or eventual subordination to some other authority (Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haiti* [4 vols., Port au Prince, 1904-1923], I, 363).

<sup>28</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 180-181.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Rochambeau and Sonthonax disagreed over the question of what troops should be used in the occupation. The latter was willing to use black freedmen whereas the former insisted upon the use of white units (Madiou, *op. cit.*, I, 363-364).



General Lavaux then persuaded the commissioners to send him as commander of the Spanish section, and an expedition was organized; but with the exception of the occupation of two border towns, this plan also came to naught.<sup>30</sup>

From the report of Kerversau and the abortive activities of the French officials at Cap Français, it would appear that the commissioners knew little of conditions in the Spanish colony when they left France in 1796. Bitter experience, however, eventually acquainted them with the realities of the situation. The actual circumstances posed many problems, some economic, some military, and some political, with none of which the French were in a position to cope.

In spite of the delay attendant upon the carrying out of the provisions of the Treaty of Basle, many of the Spanish inhabitants had seen fit to leave the island after it had become evident that no retrocession was to take place. The exact number who saw the handwriting on the wall will never be known, but from all accounts it was substantial. No doubt the freeing of the slaves in the French section convinced many that the blacks in the eastern zone would also eventually require their freedom, and probably with the same murderous violence that had brought death to many a French planter in the early days of the uprising in the west. Kerversau noted that many of the richer Spanish proprietors had fled with their goods and their slaves, and an English observer, Walton, asserted that nearly one-third of the population eventually went to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other territories still under the Spanish crown.<sup>31</sup>

There would also seem to have been a gradual movement from the outlying districts into the capital, particularly from areas adjacent to sections held by British troops along the southwest frontier where they had landed to conduct operations against the French. The British furnished a ready market for the Spaniards' cattle, thus easing the financial burden attendant upon removal.<sup>32</sup> Other colonists in the central plain drove their cattle to the northern coast where Brit-

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>31</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 186; Walton, *op. cit.*, I, 189-190.

<sup>32</sup> Madiou, *op. cit.*, I, 336.

ish agents procured transportation for them in exchange for the opportunity of purchasing the animals at reduced prices.<sup>33</sup> For the French, this depopulation of the country, both of settlers and animals, could mean but an additional and major problem: in any occupation operation, troops would be hard pressed to live off the land. The colonial treasury was in no condition to support an army of occupation sent to the Spanish section of the island; therefore, any such undertaking would have to await more favorable circumstances.

On June 27, 1796, by the Treaty of Aranjuez, Spain became the active ally of France, and war between Spain and England followed in November.<sup>34</sup> Other reasons thereupon arose for delaying occupation of the Spanish zone. Spanish-English coöperation need no longer be feared and a strong Spanish garrison at Santo Domingo was just that much more security for the entire island. Transfer at this time would have meant only many more miles of coast-line for the French to defend, and any attempt to occupy the entire island would have spread their forces dangerously thin, perhaps too thin to prevent the English, who were already entrenched on the southwest corner of the island, from annexing both the French and the Spanish zones. Nevertheless, the French did see fit to occupy Monte Christi in an effort to assure their access to whatever cattle remained in that area, since they were sorely in need of such supplies. In addition, General Kerversau was sent to the Department of Samaná as agent of the Republic, not to occupy for the French government, but to assist in military matters.<sup>35</sup>

One other factor was not without influence upon the French authorities: the specie brought to the Spanish colony annually from Mexico to pay the government officials and troops.<sup>36</sup> This money, which customarily found its way to the French zone through the channels of commerce, was the only specie coming into the colony at all, for the war with England had virtually cut off the island from contact with

<sup>33</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 186.

<sup>34</sup> Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *L'ambassade française en Espagne pendant la révolution* (Paris, 1892), p. 320.

<sup>35</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 187.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

the mother countries. Such funds were a vital necessity to the commerce with the neutral Danes and Americans, and the departure of the Spaniards would have dried up this stream of silver.

All of these factors, coupled with new English successes at Mirebalais and Grand Bois, plus renewed strife between Negroes and mulattoes in the French zone, served to convince the French officials that immediate occupation was neither possible nor desirable. In regard to the decision eventually made, General Kerversau stated his own position in favor of delay until a general peace. "But of all the government agents, none," he added, "was more firmly convinced than Roume of the dangers of taking possession. A stay of four years at Saint Domingue had made clear to him the true state of the country and the attitudes of the inhabitants; and the constantly increasing disorders of the French colony, of which he had so long been a spectator, left him in no doubt that the operation could be for her only an increase of disasters, and not an increase of powers."<sup>37</sup>

The decision to allow the Spanish flag to continue to fly over the eastern section of the island until a general peace could be arranged was made the subject of an official agreement between Paris and Madrid,<sup>38</sup> but scarcely had such an understanding been reached when the problem became one of preventing the occupation rather than that of completing it.

### III

The history of Spanish Santo Domingo from 1798 to 1801 is the history of a struggle between the legitimate French authorities, assisted by Don Joaquín García, the Spanish captain general, and the ambitious Negro chieftain Toussaint Louverture. Into the situation were also injected the intrigue of the First Consul, Napoleon, and the rising economic interest of the United States.

On May 1, 1797, the title of General in Chief of the French Armies in Saint Domingue was conferred upon Toussaint, in spite of a growing distrust by the French of the Negro's

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>38</sup> Saintoyant, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

intentions and motives. He had shown himself the only leader capable of bringing a degree of order out of the chaos that prevailed in the colony.<sup>39</sup> One by one, all of the four commissioners had departed, either by choice or as the result of the clever maneuvers of the colored general. Roume, the fifth commissioner, was still in the Spanish zone.

Then, early in 1798, General T. d'Hédouville was sent out from France to bring about a restoration of French authority in the western zone and to restrain the restless Toussaint.<sup>40</sup> He was singularly unsuccessful, however, for Toussaint continued on his own course, even going so far as to make an agreement with the British general, Maitland, on August 31, 1798, by which the British were to withdraw from the island and make no further attacks upon it during the war.<sup>41</sup> In return, Toussaint agreed that no attack should be made upon Jamaica with the use of troops from Saint Domingue, this promise being in direct opposition to the desires of Hédouville whose mission to the island included the organization of Negro troops for an attack upon that British colony.<sup>42</sup> It was further agreed that certain ports of the French colony would be open to commerce free of interference from the British Navy and British privateers. Of course, the British were to participate in this commerce. Not only did this agreement greatly strengthen Toussaint's position in the island and bring about the withdrawal of British troops, but it also indicated just how far the Negro general would go in ignoring the wishes of the French officials and the authority which France nominally maintained in the colony.

Shortly after the signing of this agreement, General Hédouville returned to France, leaving no one in the French zone capable of exercising the authority of the French government other than Toussaint himself. At this point, Commissioner Roume, who from his position in Santo Domingo had been watching the power of the Negro leader increase with no

<sup>39</sup> Logan, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Great Britain, War Office, 1/70, reprinted in full translation by Logan, *ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Stevens, consul-general of the United States, to Secretary of State Pickering, September 30, 1799, in "Letters of Toussaint Louverture and Edward Stevens," *The American Historical Review*, XVI (October, 1910), 82-83.

apparent limitation, took it upon himself to go to the French section in an attempt to curb the ambitious Toussaint.<sup>43</sup> That he realized the seriousness of the situation and the nature of the task which confronted him is evidenced by his letter to the French minister of colonies, dated 27 *frimaire*, an VII (December 17, 1798), in which he wrote of his intended departure for Cap Français in the capacity of agent. "It may well be, Citizen Minister," he concluded, "that you will hear before three months that I have been driven out, shot, or beheaded."<sup>44</sup>

When Roume departed from Santo Domingo, he left as the French agent there General Kerversau, whose previous position had been that of agent in the Department of Samaná. Both Roume and his successor were convinced that no attempt should be made to bring about occupation of the Spanish section by French forces until a general peace had been established. Consequently, when General Kerversau received word from Monte Christi that Adjutant General Devaux, one of Toussaint's subordinates, had announced his intention to occupy Puerto Plata, Santiago, and Cotuy, he immediately notified Roume of these reports and others that were circulating in Santo Domingo. Roume's reply stated that he and Toussaint were in complete agreement that no such occupation should take place.<sup>45</sup>

Kerversau was not convinced, however, particularly since agents had already appeared in the Spanish zone lauding the religious piety of Toussaint and agitating for overthrow of Spanish rule. A number of such spies and agents were working among the Negro population, even in Santo Domingo, the capital city, and Kerversau became increasingly suspicious that Roume was being deceived by the Negro chieftain.<sup>46</sup> He therefore wrote the minister of colonies that he would resist anyone who came to take over without specific authorization

<sup>43</sup> Some authors, including Madiou, have maintained that Roume went to Cap Français upon the invitation of Toussaint. However, from the report of Kerversau, who at least had the advantage of being present when Roume made his decision, it would appear that the commissioner acted upon his own initiative.

<sup>44</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 189.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 314-318.

of the Directory. He also stated that the Spaniards would assist, for he counted upon the firmness of General García and the horror of the inhabitants at the thought of African domination.<sup>47</sup>

It was early in 1799 that the United States came into the picture in such a way as to make the position of Kerversau, Roume, and García even more difficult. Toussaint had sent to that country an agent, Bunel, who, working with the erstwhile consul of the United States in Saint Domingue, Meyer, attempted to secure the reopening of commercial relations with the island. The normally heavy business traffic between the United States and Saint Domingue had stopped almost completely in 1798 as a result of the undeclared warfare between the former country and France and because of the activities of French privateers operating in the West Indies.<sup>48</sup> Toussaint's agent was quite successful, for on February 9, 1799, the American Congress passed a law authorizing President Adams to reopen trade with the French possessions when he was satisfied that privateering depredations had ceased.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, Edward Stevens, a relative of Alexander Hamilton, was appointed consul general and sent to Cap Français where he arrived April 18, 1799. After conferring with Toussaint and Roume, Stevens reached an agreement with them by which Toussaint was to prevent any further French privateering from the island, and in exchange the United States was to permit its vessels to trade at certain of the island ports. Before the agreement went into effect, similar trade advantages were extended to the British, the war between England and France notwithstanding.<sup>50</sup>

On June 22, 1799, President Adams issued a proclamation to the effect that as of August 1 of that year certain ports under Toussaint's control would be open to American commerce, but ships entering other ports would be subject to

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>48</sup> Some idea of the importance of the commerce between Saint Domingue and the United States may be realized when one notes that there were over 600 ships so engaged in 1797 (Logan, *op. cit.*, p. 60).

<sup>49</sup> 1 Statutes at Large, pp. 613-616.

<sup>50</sup> For discussions of these negotiations, see Logan, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-98; and Montague, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-40.

condemnation and confiscation.<sup>51</sup> Realizing that such an arrangement would lead only to an aggrandizement of Toussaint's power and thereby increase the danger to the Spanish section of the island, both Captain-General García and General Kerversau protested. General García wrote to President Adams denouncing the discrimination and requesting the opening of Spanish ports as well, but he received no reply.<sup>52</sup> Kerversau complained to Roume, pointing out that if the Spanish section of the island were "regarded as really French, should it not participate in the advantages of the French government in Saint Domingue? If it is still Spanish," he continued in his letter of 29 *fructidor* (September 15), "why does the United States, which is not at war with the King of Spain, make such a rigorous exception for the domains which he still possesses in this island? . . . In the opinion of John Adams, there actually exists in Saint Domingue a government which is neither the French government nor the Spanish government, and it is only with that government that he wishes to do business."<sup>53</sup> Kerversau and García were soon to see just how far the United States would go in support of Toussaint and in the protection of its commercial stake in the island.

Throughout this entire period preparations for the ultimate departure of the Spanish authorities from Santo Domingo were gradually being carried out. Troops brought there from neighboring colonies during the earlier war with France were withdrawn. The archbishop departed and the audiencia was transferred to Cuba.<sup>54</sup> The same ships that removed the audiencia brought in the silver from Mexico to replenish the local treasury, the amount being in excess of one million *gourdes*.<sup>55</sup> General Kerversau, who had recently been superseded by General Antoine Chanlatte as French agent, but who had continued to remain in Santo Domingo,

<sup>51</sup> James D. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (20 vols., Washington, 1896), I, 278-279.

<sup>52</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 315.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> José Gabriel García, *Compendio de la historia de Santo Domingo* (2 vols., Santo Domingo, 1879), I, 188.

<sup>55</sup> Worth of a *gourde* at that time was approximately five francs.

noted that while the arrival of the silver greatly raised the morale of the local inhabitants it also furnished Toussaint with a very substantial motive for bringing about the immediate annexation of the Spanish section of the island.<sup>56</sup>

As early as October, 1799, there were reports that Toussaint had definitely made up his mind to act in this matter, and there are some indications that Roume's sending of General Chanlatte to replace Kerversau may have had as its motive the desire to place in Santo Domingo an agent more amenable to occupation.<sup>57</sup> That Roume had come to favor such a project is seriously to be doubted, for in December Toussaint sent General Agé, one of his aides, to Roume to ask permission for an immediate occupation and the request was bluntly rejected.<sup>58</sup> Roume was certainly aware that Toussaint's wish was contrary to French policy, and the commissioner would have had to violate his instructions to issue an order for annexation.<sup>59</sup>

The Negro general did not allow a lonely French agent to stand in his way for long. He was now apparently determined to prevent if possible any reassertion of French authority in the island. After his deportation of Hédouville in 1798 he certainly realized that his position *vis-à-vis* Paris was far from strong. Nor had his agreement with the United States and with the British general, Maitland, helped his standing. Roume he had in his power and therefore did not fear; but as long as the Spanish flag continued to fly over

<sup>56</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 320.

<sup>57</sup> Stevens to Pickering, October 26, 1799, in "Letters of Toussaint Louverture and Edward Stevens," *loc. cit.*, pp. 85-86. The contrary motive would seem to be indicated, however, by the fact that Chanlatte was a political friend of Rigaud, Toussaint's feared mulatto rival who still opposed the black leader in the south of Saint Domingue. Were Chanlatte in Santo Domingo and Rigaud in southern Saint Domingue to form an effective liaison, Toussaint's position would have been decidedly weakened. Such a liaison was in fact subsequently attempted, but without success. For Chanlatte's attitude with respect to Toussaint, see Madiou, *op. cit.*, II, 27.

<sup>58</sup> Stoddard, *op. cit.*, p. 283; "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 320.

<sup>59</sup> Saintoyant, *op. cit.*, p. 154; Madiou, *op. cit.*, II, 28; cf. Napoléon to Forfait, ministre de la Marine, October 25, 1800; Napoléon to Toussaint, November 4, 1800; Napoléon to Roume, November 5, 1800; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier.* (27 vols., Paris, 1858), VI, Documents 5140, 5160, and 5163 (hereinafter cited as *Correspondance de Napoléon*).



Santo Domingo there was a possibility that the eastern end of the island might be used as a base for French military operations against him. Toussaint's fears were not without foundation, for on December 25, 1799, the First Consul sent three new commissioners to assist Roume and to discern the true military situation.<sup>60</sup> Contrary to the procedure of previous French representatives, this group landed at Santo Domingo rather than at Cap Français. There they conferred with Captain-General García and with Generals Chanlatte and Kerversau early in April of 1800.<sup>61</sup>

The Negro general now decided to force Roume to issue a decree calling for occupation. He therefore stirred up the Negroes at Cap Français to perform the same routine which had hastened the departure of Hédouville a year and a half before. An insurrection took place during Toussaint's absence, the pretext being a protestation against the alleged kidnapping of free Negroes from the French zone by the Spaniards, who were supposed to be carrying their victims into slavery in the eastern part of the island. Toussaint's nephew, General Moyse, conducted the affair. After bringing Roume, already a prisoner held under arrest at Government House,<sup>62</sup> to Haut de Cap, he offered the French official the alternatives of ordering the French occupation or having the Negroes turned loose to sack Le Cap.<sup>63</sup> Toussaint returned at the proper time to accept Roume's capitulation and order of April 27, 1800, which directed immediate occupation of the Spanish portion of the island.<sup>64</sup>

General Agé and a boatload of white soldiers were thereupon dispatched for Santo Domingo. A slight delay was encountered, however, when the ship fell into British hands, being captured by the frigate *Alarm*. The troops were put

<sup>60</sup> *Correspondance de Napoléon*, December 25, 1799, VI, Document 4456; Stoddard, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-285.

<sup>61</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 323.

<sup>62</sup> Stevens to Pickering, March 16, 1800, in "Letters of Toussaint Louverture and Edward Stevens," *loc. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>63</sup> Stevens to Pickering, April 19 and April 27, 1800, *ibid.*, pp. 94-95; "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 321. Madiou gives as Roume's alternative the threat of extermination of all Europeans in the Spanish zone (*op. cit.*, II, 28).

<sup>64</sup> "Arrêté de 27 avril, 1800," published by Madiou, *op. cit.*, II, 29; cf. Saintoyant, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155.

ashore at Monte Christi, still in the French zone.<sup>65</sup> General Agé then proceeded on alone while his four hundred troops obtained other transportation. The soldiers eventually reached their destination some time after their commander.<sup>66</sup>

The Spaniards were totally unprepared for this sudden move. The three new commissioners who had landed in Santo Domingo early in April had informed General García that no occupation would be attempted until a general peace had been achieved. The local cabildo had thereupon written Napoleon advising the First Consul of the situation and telling him of the importance of providing a regime appropriate to the locality and character of the inhabitants.<sup>67</sup> Then had come the word by courier of Roume's decree of April 27.

General García had replied by letter to Roume indicating his willingness to effectuate the transfer of sovereignty provided he were allowed time to obtain or were otherwise furnished with transportation and the necessary escort to remove safely the troops and property belonging to the king of Spain. He had further stated that in the meantime he would surrender Puerto Plato, Santiago, and Azua, holding only the capital pending evacuation.<sup>68</sup> The very next day General Agé had arrived to take over.

The presence of this new French general and his troops caused great irritation to the Spanish inhabitants, who addressed themselves to the magistrates asking that General García refuse to surrender the colony until the return of deputies whom they proposed to send to Paris and Madrid to make known the true situation on the island. The deputies were to ask of the Republic a separate regime for the Spanish section of the country. The cabildos of both Santo Domingo and San Carlos received such petitions, and they were joined by the ecclesiastical cabildo in a general appeal to the captain-general.<sup>69</sup> Under pressure of these appeals, García conferred with Chanlatte, who indicated his agreement with the Spanish viewpoint. As a result, on May 21, General García issued a

<sup>65</sup> Stevens to Pickering, May 28, 1800, in "Letters of Toussaint Louverture and Edward Stevens," *loc. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>66</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 323.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416.

declaration to the effect that he would suspend the transfer until the two European powers had been consulted by deputies who would be sent for that purpose. His statement indicated that he believed Roume to be without authority to issue the decree of April 27 in view of the existing agreement between the two countries involved.<sup>70</sup>

Several days later, General Agé, who had shown reluctance to leave, was escorted through a large crowd lining the streets to the gates of the city. General García and Agent Chanlatte accompanied him to a point where transportation was waiting to carry him back to French territory.<sup>71</sup> Roume was notified of this action and of García's declaration, and the imprisoned commissioner indicated his approval by revoking his order of April 27, the revocation taking place on June 16. This later decree was never printed, and hand-written copies that the commissioner ordered sent to General García were intercepted by Toussaint's agents. Word of the revocation eventually reached Santo Domingo, however.

Of Roume's position at this time, Kerversau remarked: ". . . The representative of the first nation of the universe was nothing more in its colony than the captive of Moyse, the hostage of Toussaint, and the plaything of the lowest of the Negroes."<sup>72</sup> Thus the only semblance of French authority still on the island consisted of the persons of Generals Chanlatte and Kerversau at Santo Domingo. The three new commissioners who had arrived from France in April had made the mistake of going to the French zone where they had been arrested immediately by General Moyse and brought as prisoners to Cap Français.<sup>73</sup>

#### IV

After the flouting of Roume's order by General García, the Spaniards realized the danger of their position. Toussaint was certain to attack as soon as he was free of military problems in the French zone. But General Rigaud, the mulatto chieftain, strongly pro-French, was still at large on the

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 417.

<sup>71</sup> Welles, *op. cit.*, I, 20; "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 418.

<sup>72</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 422.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420; Madiou, *op. cit.*, II, 40-41; Stoddard, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

southern peninsula with a sizable body of troops; and Toussaint's decision to crush this opposition gave the residents of Santo Domingo a short breathing spell. The latter were unable to make much use of their opportunity.

They failed even to organize the deputation to go to Europe and present the colony's case at Paris and Madrid. The cabildo at Santo Domingo was given the task of choosing a delegate but wasted five months trying to reach a decision and raise sufficient money to finance the undertaking. Finally, Adjutant General Boyé, a deputy of Commissioner Chanlatte, left for France, only to fall into the hands of the English and to be taken to Jamaica as a prisoner.<sup>74</sup> Don Juan Oyarzábal, a prominent Spanish proprietor, was persuaded to go to Spain; and he succeeded in getting to the United States, from which place he secured passage to Lisbon.<sup>75</sup> But they had waited too long: Toussaint was already at hand.

General García and Agent Chanlatte took steps along another course. Upon the prompting of the cabildo, they conferred with a representative of Toussaint's opponent, Rigaud, as to the possibility of forming a coalition against the Negro chief.<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately they were still dickering over terms and a request for arms that Rigaud had made when the civil war in the French zone came to an end with Toussaint completely triumphant. It is doubtful whether much could have been accomplished through a coalition in any case, for Toussaint had powerful assistance in his final campaign against the mulatto general. This assistance was in the form of several American warships, among them the *General Greene*, which not only enforced Toussaint's declared blockade and drove French privateers from the island, but which even entered into the battle of Jacmel by bombarding the town and Rigaud's forts.<sup>77</sup> The contribution of these ships to Rigaud's final surrender was substantial.<sup>78</sup> The United States had

<sup>74</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, I, 423.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 97.

<sup>77</sup> Knox, *Naval Documents*, V, 250-251, excerpts reprinted in Logan, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>78</sup> Logan, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-110.

come to look upon Toussaint's victory as the only means of assuring the continuance of a valuable commerce with the island. Aiding Toussaint was also a most effective way of carrying on the undeclared war with France.<sup>79</sup>

With Rigaud out of the way by the end of the summer of 1800, Toussaint was now free to turn his attention to the Spanish zone. Apparently he had never quite taken his attention away from it. Judging by Kerversau's account, the Negro had been playing a skillful game of psychological warfare for some time. He had spread rumors, some intended to quiet the inhabitants' fears, others to rouse them anew. He is reported to have made the American consul-general in Saint Dominique, Stevens, his unwitting tool by giving him false information in the knowledge that he was in communication with General García. As a result the Spanish and French officials in Santo Domingo never knew when to rely on Steven's reports, which were usually of an alarming nature.<sup>80</sup>

The inevitable result of the continuous bombardment of contradictory reports was fatigue on the part of the Spaniards, caused by the constant uncertainty; and eventually demoralization followed. The frontier garrisons which General García had strengthened withered away. Instead of a spirit of coöperation, the prevailing attitude became that of every man for himself.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, the captain general continued his attempts at preparation for what he believed to be inevitable. He secured fourteen thousand weight of powder from the United States and had it distributed in the night. He circulated the militia roll and tried to get the body organized, although it had not been called out since the cession in 1795.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, on January 6, 1801, the fatal word arrived in the form of a message from Toussaint that Roume's order of April 27 would now be put into effect. The Negro general demanded satisfaction for the insult given General Agé. He also expressed the hope that General García would show the

<sup>79</sup> Logan states: "The United States was, in brief, aiding Toussaint because he was an enemy of France" (*op. cit.*, p. 103).

<sup>80</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, II, 100.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

proper attitude and thereby render unnecessary the use of force.<sup>83</sup> General García and General Chanlatte hurried to organize a defense, but the latter wanted to attack in the back country and the former wanted to fight a defensive battle before the city. Consequently, they were unable to do either successfully.

Toussaint advanced immediately after sending his message. A northern army under General Moyse captured Santiago on January 11, 1801; and a southern army under Toussaint's brother, Paul Louverture, advanced upon Santo Domingo, the capital. A brief but unsuccessful defense was attempted along the Nizao River, west of the city. In a battle fought on January 12, the untrained and ill-equipped Spanish militia broke and fled, leaving the small corps of Spanish and French regulars no alternative but to retire before the numerically superior forces of Toussaint.<sup>84</sup> Rather than withstand a siege, General García entered into negotiations with the Negro leader on January 22, 1801, for surrender of the colony. A formal entry into the capital was made by Toussaint on January 27, thus bringing to a dismal termination a period of three hundred years of Spanish rule in Santo Domingo.

In order to prevent Toussaint from capturing the French officials, General García gave them passports on January 13, and all, including Chanlatte and Kerversau, were able to get away before the city fell. On January 22, a letter from García to the governor of Maracaibo had requested that more ships be sent to accommodate the Spanish troops and others who might wish to leave, inasmuch as all available vessels had been used to send off the French officials, women, children, and the sick.<sup>85</sup> Shortly thereafter the Spanish Cantabrian regiment was able to leave, and the captain general himself departed early in February on the Danish ship, *La Elisa*.

Upon arriving in Maracaibo on February 22, 1801, General García wrote a full report of the surrender to Don Manuel de Guevara y Vasconcelos, captain general of Vene-

<sup>83</sup> Letter reprinted in full by Madiou, *op. cit.*, II, 75; cf., Saintoyant, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>84</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, II, 211-214.

<sup>85</sup> Fray Cipriano de Utrera, "Toussaint Louverture," *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación* (Ciudad Trujillo), I (1938), 87.

zuela, in which he noted that Toussaint had been helped substantially by the English. He denounced the perfidy of the Negro general and reported the violence of his troops after they had taken over the city of Santo Domingo.<sup>86</sup> Speaking of General García in his report to the French minister of marine, General Kerversau lauded the man's character, his spirit of justice, and his intentions. "As for me," he concluded, "however much my political and military opinion may have differed from his as to the course to follow in the circumstances, I do not hesitate to say one could serve his country with greater success, but not with more zeal or with purer intentions."<sup>87</sup>

In closing, it is interesting to note that American forces had not aided Toussaint in his final plunge into Spanish territory. By the Treaty of Marfontaine, September 30, 1800, the undeclared war between the United States and France had come to an end. Orders were then given to American naval officers that Toussaint should be given no assistance in his conquest of the Spanish part of the island.<sup>88</sup> This change of policy came just a little too late to spare the Spaniards their misfortune in Santo Domingo, for had the earlier assistance to the Negro leader not been forthcoming, Toussaint might still have been fighting Rigaud in the west end of the island when the Peace of Amiens gave the French their long-awaited opportunity to write *finis* to the career of that ambitious warrior.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> García to Guevara y Vasconcelos, February 24, 1801, in full in Utrera, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>87</sup> "Rapport de Kerversau," *loc. cit.*, II, 222.

<sup>88</sup> Logan, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>89</sup> The struggle for the control of the Spanish section of the island continued for a number of years, during which time the French armies of General LeClerc successfully occupied the area and temporarily ended Negro control. These armies were in turn decimated by yellow fever and constant revolutionary activity and eventually withdrew. The Spanish section then witnessed an abortive four-year occupation by the French general, Ferrand, between 1804 and 1808. Revolutionary activities by the Dominicans themselves then brought about the death of Ferrand and return of the colony to the Spanish crown. A complete account of this later period remains to be written. Perhaps the best existing work on it is the memoir report of J. B. Lemonnier Delafosse, recently translated into Spanish and published in the Dominican Republic under the title of *Segunda campaña de Santo Domingo* (Santiago, 1946).